REMARKS

In the Office Action dated December 2, 2002, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 7-15, 16, 18-19, 22 and 25 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,470,171 issued to Helmick et al. ("Helmick"), rejected claims 2-3, 21 and 24 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Helmick, and rejected claims 4-6, 17, 20 and 23 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Helmick in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,347,943 issued to Fields et al. ("Fields"). Applicant traverses these rejections. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the non-final Office Action dated December 2, 2002, are respectfully requested.

I. Amendments

Applicant has amended claims 15, 22, and 25 to recite "executable applications on the client computer" or similar language. For example, claim 15 previously recited a virtual picture frame that "includes one or more buttons with associated links to the executable applications that are executed on the client computer." Claim 15 now recites a virtual picture frame that "includes one or more buttons with associated links to the executable applications on the client computer." Similarly, claim 25 previously recited "executable code configured to present in the second portion problems to be solved by a user." Claim 25 now recites "executable code on the client computer configured to present in the second portion problems to be solved by a user."

Applicant has also amended claims 15, 16, and 22 to recite a "browser-type window" or similar language, in addition to a virtual picture frame.

II. Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102 and § 103

A. Embodiments of the Claimed Invention

Applicant's technique involves providing information, such as course material. With applicant's technique, some of the provided information may be accessed via executable applications located on a client computer. Links to these executable applications on the client computer are provided in a virtual picture frame that may surround web content or other information that is displayable within the virtual picture

frame. For example, a browser-type window displayed in conjunction with the virtual picture frame may display online information, information from the executable application, or a combination of both. In this way, Applicant's technique provides the interactivity needed for learning without the use of Java Applets or JavaScript applications that require interpretation by a browser. Accordingly, one benefit of Applicant's technique is that it avoids browser incompatibility problems that may arise when using Java Applets or JavaScript applications. Another benefit is that Applicant's technique is more efficient than learning systems that rely primarily on executables running on a server computer, as delays that result from generating and transmitting client computer requests, running executables on the server, and transmitting the resulting requested information are avoided.

B. Analysis

Claims 1-25 recite "providing a virtual picture frame," or similar language. Neither Helmick nor Fields disclose providing a virtual picture frame or anything resembling a virtual picture frame. Instead, Helmick discloses displaying educational course information using a standard web browser (e.g., Internet Explorer®). A web browser is not the same as a virtual picture frame. Also, Helmick does not describe "providing" a web browser or anything similar. In contrast, Helmick assumes that the client computer is already equipped with a web browser. (Helmick 6:46-53; Figure 1, "Web Browser 22.") To further clarify the distinction between a browser window and a virtual picture frame, claims 15, 16, and 22 have been amended to recite a "browser-type window" or similar language, in addition to the recited virtual picture frame.

Claims 1, 15, 16, and their dependent claims recite a virtual picture frame that "includes one or more links to the executable applications on the client computer" or similar language. In Figures 3A-3X, Helmick merely discloses web pages displayed using a standard web browser, where the web pages provide links to other web pages, which are also displayed using a standard web browser. A web browser is not the same as a virtual picture frame, as discussed above, and links to web pages (or to Java Applets on a server computer -- as disclosed in Fields) are not the same as links to

executable applications on a client computer. In contrast, web page links are associated with information stored on a server computer, such as HTML script files or Java class files stored on a server computer.

The arguments with respect to claims 1, 15, 16, and their dependent claims also apply to claim 22, its dependent claims, and claim 25. Claim 22 now recites "receiving a request from the user through a button or link in the virtual picture frame to access an executable application on the client computer." Claim 25 now recites "a plurality of buttons wherein at least one button is associated with executable code on the client computer."

III. Declaration under 37 C.F.R. § 1.131

Applicant submits herewith a Declaration under 37 C.F.R. § 1.131 for inventor Thomsen that establishes an invention date prior to Helmick's August 27, 1999, filing date. This Declaration is seasonably presented, as it is submitted prior to a final rejection. MPEP § 715.09. Accordingly, Helmick is removed as a reference.

As explained in detail in the attached Declaration, the inventor believes he possessed either the whole invention as claimed in claims 1-25, or something fairly falling within the claims prior to August 27, 1999, Helmick's filing date. The facts presented in the Declaration carry with them any variations and adaptations that would have been obvious at the same time, to one of ordinary skill in the art. MPEP § 715.02. Thus, despite any minor difference between the facts presented in the Declaration and the claims, the inventor believes he conceived of the claimed invention before the effective date of Helmick. Additionally, the inventor diligently reduced the invention to practice, as he explained in the Declaration.

Overall, none of the applied references singly or in any motivated combination, teach or suggest the features recited in independent claims 1, 15, 16, 19, 22, and 25, and thus such claims are allowable. Since these independent claims are allowable, based on at least the above reasons, the claims which depend from them are likewise allowable. If the undersigned attorney has overlooked a relevant teaching in any of the

references, the Examiner is requested to point out specifically where such teaching may be found.

In view of the foregoing, the claims pending in the application comply with the requirements of 35 U.S.C. § 112 and patentably define over the prior art. A Notice of Allowance is, therefore, respectfully requested. Examiner Sotomayor is encouraged to contact Mr. Daley-Watson by telephone at (206) 264-6384 to discuss the above and other distinctions between the claims and the applied references if desired. If Examiner Sotomayor notes any informalities in the claims, he is encouraged to contact Mr. Daley-Watson to expediently correct any such informalities.

If the Examiner has any questions or believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is encouraged to call the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,
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APPENDIX

VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

15. (Amended) A remote learning system for use with a computerized network, comprising:

one or more client computers coupled to the computerized network, wherein each client computer provides a client selection for a remote educational course;

a server computer system coupled to the computerized network, wherein the server computer system includes:

at least one server computer for receiving the selection for the remote educational course, retrieving one or more executable applications relevant to the selected course and providing the executable applications to each client computer;

a data storage device coupled to the server computer having a database from which the server computer retrieves data relevant to the selected course; and

wherein the server computer is configured to provide a virtual picture frame, wherein the virtual picture frame is configured to be displayed in addition to a browser window, wherein the virtual picture frame surrounds the data relevant to the selected course, and includes one or more buttons with associated links to the executable applications ~~that are executed~~ on the client computer, and wherein at least one of the executable applications automatically provides customized executable problems associated with the selected course in response to user selection of one of the buttons.

16. (Amended) A computer-readable medium storing or transmitting instructions which, when implemented by a computer perform a method for learning course material, comprising:

receiving from a computer a user selection for an educational course;

providing course material, including text;

providing one or more executable applications to the computer relevant to the selected course; and

providing a virtual picture frame wherein the frame is provided in addition to a browser-type window, surrounds the course material and includes one or more links to the executable applications on the client computer associated with the selected course.

22. (Amended) A method for use with a public computer network coupling at least one client computer to a server computer, the method comprising:

at the client computer, providing a client selection for a remote educational course;

receiving course material, including text;

receiving a virtual picture frame;

receiving one or more executable applications;

presenting the virtual picture frame surrounding the text of the selected course, wherein the virtual picture frame is presented in addition to a browser-type window and includes buttons or links to accessing each of the executable applications and further, wherein the text requires the user to access one or more of the executable applications;

receiving a request from the user through a button or link in the virtual picture frame to access an executable application on the client computer; and

executing the requested executable application.

25. (Amended) A computer-readable medium containing a data structure having information for displaying information regarding an education course provided by a remote computer under a client-server system, wherein the client-server system includes a network coupling at least one client computer with a server computer, the information comprising:

a first portion for displaying a virtual picture frame;

a second portion for displaying text of a remote educational course selected by a user, wherein the first portion includes a plurality of buttons, wherein at least one button is associated with executable code on the client computer configured to present in the second portion problems to be solved by a user under the remote educational course selected by the user, and wherein a second button is associated with reference material relevant to the remote educational course selected by the user, wherein a portion of the reference material relevant to the remote educational course selected by the user is displayable within the second portion.